Family instability and complexity have grown dramatically in the United States in recent decades, trends that are concentrated among the most disadvantaged of our citizens. Child support is critical but our policies are ill-equipped to handle the reality of today’s families. Drawing on more than 400 in-depth interviews with low-income noncustodial fathers, Edin argues that child support is the key institution to insuring resources flow from the noncustodial parent to the child. Child support must deliver as many paternal resources—both material and socioemotional—to children as possible through strengthening co-parenting relationships and
father-child bonds.

Kathryn Edin is the Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Public Health at Johns Hopkins University and is one of the nation’s leading poverty researchers. She deploys ethnographic observations, in-depth interviews, and mixed method approaches to the domains of welfare and low-wage work, family life, and neighborhood contexts.

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